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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KISL](#) [ASEC](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: DEMONSTRATORS DENOUNCE "THREAT" TO AL AQSA

Classified By: CDA Christopher Henzel for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (U) Summary. Around 1000 Jordanians peacefully marched in Amman on August 19 to "defend" the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. The demonstrators, who had received GOJ approval for the event, shouted anti-American and anti-Israeli slogans in addition to condemning the U.S. presence in Iraq. A smaller protest took place the same day in Irbid. End Summary.

2. (U) A peaceful demonstration "in defense of the Al Aqsa Mosque" took place in downtown Amman on Friday, August 19, following noon prayers. According to press reports, more than 1,200 Jordanians took part in the march, though Jordanian Public Security Directorate (PSD) sources say the number was closer to 1,000. Organized by the Opposition Parties' Higher Coordination Committee (which is dominated by the Islamic Action Front), the protest began at the Al Hussein Mosque and ended at the Greater Amman Municipality building, lasting around one hour. The governor of Amman originally denied a permit request for the event for "technical reasons", but permission was eventually granted after organizers filed a second request.

3. (U) The timing of the march coincided with the 36th anniversary of an attempt by Israeli extremists to burn down the Al Aqsa Mosque on August 21, 1969. The demonstrators carried banners and chanted slogans demanding that the mosque be protected from alleged plans by extremists to demolish it and build a Jewish temple on the site. Some of the banners read "No Normalization with Zionism", "Down With Israel and America", "No to Zionists' Embassies on Islamic Grounds", "Long Life for Palestinians and Iraqis", and "No to Americans in Iraq".

4. (U) During the march, Fuad Dabour, Secretary General of the small Baath Arab Progressive Party, reportedly called for unified Arab efforts to counter "imminent threats" to Jerusalem and its holy sites.

5. (U) Not to be left out, about 600 residents and supporters of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) in the northern city of Irbid held a peaceful rally on Friday night to mark the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Two IAF leaders addressed the crowd during the event, calling the disengagement from Gaza a result of the "continued resistance of the Palestinian troops against the Zionist enemy". According to PSD sources, they also warned the Israelis not to take any action against the Al Aqsa Mosque.

6. (SBU) There were no arrests or injuries at either demonstration, according to the PSD. GOJ authorities closely monitored the events and had provided post with advance notice of both marches.

7. (C) COMMENT: The organizers of the marches wisely couched their events as demonstrations in defense of a revered Islamic holy site rather than a protest against Israel, making it difficult for the GOJ to deny their permit request. The Islamists and other oppositionists then predictably used the march to also attack two of their favorite targets: Jordanian relations with Israel, and the U.S. presence in Iraq. END COMMENT.

HENZEL